

ATF: The Assassin

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[This is a Mag 7 Alternate Universe story]

Ezra was seated in a booth, his back to the wall in a small out of the way cafe, or as out of the way as one can get at the 16th Street Mall. It was mid afternoon on a Saturday and the cafe was only catering to a few patrons. An early snow had covered the ground that morning, but any telltale signs were now vanquished beneath the fickled Colorado sun. Ezra sipped at his bitter coffee, ignoring the rest of his stale danish. Instead of his usual stylish attire, he was dressed in blue jeans and a dark blue muscle shirt. A plain baseball style cap covered his thick sandy-brown hair, allowing only a strand or two to peek out from underneath. He seemed to be engrossed in his newspaper, but the highly trained agent was totally aware of everything and everyone around him. He was not surprised when an older gentleman slid into the seat across from him. The waitress came up immediately to the gentleman.

"Just coffee, please," he told her, giving her a quick smile as he removed his wire-framed sunglasses, slipping them into his shirt pocket.

The gentleman's face mirrored Standish's strong features and clean shaven appearance, except with a military style haircut, which was graying slightly on the sides. He wore black khakis and a tan polo shirt under a black leather jacket. The man's blue eyes always reminded Ezra of Larabee's own icy orbs, which he would never relate at risk of bodily harm to his person.

Ezra smiled at his long time friend and mentor. Lenny Hoskins was an FBI agent out of Atlanta and had trained Ezra. They had hated each other on sight, but their fate had already been determined and they had become steadfast friends. Lenny was the only person, outside of the six men he worked with, that he trusted with his life. But Lenny had a little more than the others, he had Ezra's confidence. Lenny Hoskins was the only person that the standoffish agent trusted with all his secret fears and dreams. Something the others had yet to achieve. Lenny was the brother he always wanted and needed. He should of felt happy seeing his old friend, but something in the FBI Agent's message didn't give the perceptive undercover man a warm fuzzy.

Ezra folded the newspaper and laid it aside as the waitress brought Lenny his coffee.

"So Lenny, what brings you to the wild, wild west?" Ezra greeted.

"What? I can't just come to see my old friend?" Lenny replied, trying to sound sufficiently hurt by Ezra's doubtful gaze.

Standish stared intently at his friend waiting for a more acceptable answer. He could read Lenny like a book, even with pages missing.

"Alright, you're right I'm here for a reason." Lenny's voice dropped in volume and took on a more serious tone, one Ezra was very familiar with and never liked.

"Do you know a Berend Damhoff?"

Ezra cocked his head slightly and his brows came together in thought. "No, should I?"

"Well, he owns a trucking business here in Denver, which is only a cover for moving drugs across the border. Word has it that he's put a contract out on you."

The young ATF agent stared impassively back at Hoskins, as if the man had just told him what flavor ice cream he liked. He leaned back in the vinyl booth hearing the air press out. 'Well this was a first, he had actually become important enough that somebody wanted him dead.'

"It appears this Berend Damhoff wants to get you, maybe before you get him?" Lenny continued with a little agitation in his voice. He noticed the slight smile on Ezra's face and was afraid the over-confident agent wouldn't take the threat seriously. There had been times when Lenny thought that Ezra might have a death wish, but then he realized his friend was just cocky enough to think he couldn't die. This was just his way. Ezra would do whatever it took to catch the bad guy.

Ezra Standish was the best undercover agent west of the Mississippi river and apparently his expertise had not gone unnoticed.

"Now Ez, you know Larabee and I don't exactly see eye to eye. Hell, I hate the man's guts, but he knows his job, you need to tell him."

"No." Ezra simply answered, trying once again to drink the flavorless liquid they called coffee here.

"Why not?" Lenny asked, exasperation already filling his voice. He knew he wouldn't be able to convince his long time friend to ask for help.

"Because, with all good intentions they would lock me away somewhere for my own protection and maybe get themselves killed," Ezra explained.

"And this is a bad thing because?" Lenny asked with an amused grin. "I'm sorry," he quickly replied seeing the not so amused glare from his friend. Ezra and Larabee didn't always get along, but he would never wish any harm to the somber Team Leader.

"I couldn't live with that, Lenny." The enigmatic undercover agent stared down into his coffee. He hated to admit it, even to himself, but the six men he worked with had managed to somehow chip a hole through his wall of deference, which protected and hid the real man inside. They all knew the self-serving, egotistical, confident individual he portrayed was far from the truth.

Lenny didn't like certain individuals of the elite ATF unit, but if was for personal reasons. He knew they were the best at their jobs and they seemed to be trying to pull Ezra into their family, whether he wanted to or not.

With a resigned sign Lenny conceded defeated and replied, "Well, I guess that leaves me no other choice then to become your back up."

Ezra smiled at this, it had been a long time since the two men had worked together. Lenny was the only man who had stood by him when rumors of him being on the take started to fly. Lenny was glad when Ezra was offered a job with the ATF, hoping his young prodigy could start anew.

***** Part 2

No one in the office missed the fact that the usually composed agent seemed a bit on edge. Agent Dunne passed by Ezra's cubicle, stopping just outside as the southern accent rose in volume and anger.

"Mother please, I do not want you to visit at this time." He paused. JD couldn't understand why Ezra was talking that way to his mother. "I promise, if you stay away for now, on my next vacation I'll come to the South of France and meet what's her name, yes." There was another minute of quiet then, "Good-bye mother." Ezra hung up the phone and closed his eyes releasing the breath he always seemed to hold whenever he had to talk with the whirlwind that was his mother. "Mr. Dunne, please refrain from eavesdropping on my conversations," Ezra angrily accosted the young agent causing him to jump slightly.

"I'm sorry Ezra I didn't..." he stammered apologetically.

Ezra waved the flustered agent's apology away. "What do you want?"

The same sharp tone he had used with his mother still lingered in his voice. JD handed the agitated agent a folder.

"Here's the information on that case you asked for."

He took another deep breath and tried to relax. He was uptight, someone was trying to kill him and he feared for the others; more than he feared for himself. He looked at the young computer whiz and forced a smile. "Thank you, Mr. Dunne."

"Is everything alright, Ezra?" The young agent was totally baffled at the older agent's sudden mood swings.

"Yes, everything is fine," he lied. JD stared for a moment shrugged his shoulders and continued on.

Ezra sat back at his desk it had been two days since Lenny had told him someone was trying to kill him. And he wasn't getting any closer to discovering who that someone was or why this man Damhoff wanted him dead. Berend Damhoff was a seedy character, but shrewd. He supposedly used his trucks to transport drugs across state lines and even borders, but there had yet to be enough evidence to arrest him. He had checked through all his past cases for any connection to Berend Damhoff, but found nothing.

Ezra picked up the phone to call Lenny, he needed a big favor.

The two men met at a deli a few blocks from the Agency. It catered mostly to the yuppie crowd so Standish didn't worry about one of his associates walking in unexpectedly.

"Are you nuts?" Lenny asked his young friend.

Standish just smiled bringing out his dimples. "I've been accused of that."

Hoskins shook his head.

"Can you do it?" Ezra repeated.

Lenny took a deep breath. "Yeah, Judge Travis owes me one, but what do you think you'll find at Damhoff's trucking office?"

"Hopefully, the name of the assassin or I'd settle for any criminal activity at this point."

"I'll have the Judge tell Larabee that the FBI received a tip that Damhoff has a huge cache awaiting delivery. You know I'll have to make myself known to him then."

Ezra cringed slightly at this, he knew Larabee despised the smug FBI agent and the feeling was mutual. He couldn't understand why the two men hated each other so much, could it be they were so much alike? Again the threat of bodily harm kept him silent.

The next morning Ezra didn't react to Larabee's sudden announcement. He informed his team that they had gotten a tip from the FBI about Damhoff trucking and were to raid the establishment in two hours. Everyone started hustling to prepare, checking weapons and communications and donning vests.

Lenny Hoskins exited the elevator thirty minutes later and headed for Larabee's office. Tanner stood and blocked Hoskins' entrance into Chris' office. He knew Hoskins was a good agent, but that didn't mean he had to like him. The man had an arrogance about him that rivaled Wilmington's.

Tanner stood an inch taller than the FBI agent, but this didn't deter the veteran agent. "Since when did Larabee get himself a guard dog?" Lenny sneered at the lean sharpshooter.

Josiah came up just in time to grab Tanner who was about to punch the smug agent in the face. "Easy Brother Vin, he's one of the good guys."

"Ha, since when?" Tanner laughed shrugging off Sanchez's restraining hand.

"Brother Hoskins, I assume you're here because of the raid. I would suggest you stay on our good side as we will be covering your back," Josiah threatened, the slight smile on his long face taking away some of the menacing tone.

Lenny casually walked past the two men. "What the hell are you doing here?" Larabee yelled as Lenny strode into his office uninvited and sat himself down in one of the two chairs that sat facing the huge oak desk.

The FBI agent casually crossed his legs and resurrected a calm facade, which he knew would only piss off the somber ATF leader. "This is an FBI case, we asked for your assistance remember?" Hoskins replied, unfazed by Chris' attitude towards him. Ezra had quietly appeared in the doorway and grinned at the two men. They reminded him of two dominate wolves, each vying for control of the pack, neither one willing to back down or be intimidated by the other.

Chris shot a deadly glare at Standish knowing the two men were friends and probably protected each other. He was glad Ezra had someone to confide in, he only wished it wasn't the smug asshole in front of him. Larabee took four long strides to the door and slammed it in Ezra's amused face.

"Okay, what's going on?" he asked, turning to Hoskins.

"Like the Judge said, we have reason to believe that Damhoff trucking is about ready to transport a large quantity of drugs. Hopefully we can catch him before he ships it out."

Chris suspected that there was more, but refrained from saying so. Hoskins only better hope that no one was hurt or there would be hell to pay and Larabee knew all about hell.

*****Part 3

The raid went down by the numbers with Chris, Lenny, Vin and Buck

entering through the front and Josiah, Nathan, Ezra and JD through the back. Vin was suspicious from the get go. He didn't notice any guards or increased security what so ever.

"FREEZE, ATF!" Chris shouted as everyone charged into the huge open bay warehouse in east Denver. Four semi-tractor trailers stood in the bay areas. Lenny figured he could keep everyone busy searching those trucks. They found four people in the warehouse, three driver's and one mechanic, who readily gave up. As soon as their presence was known and everything was secure, Ezra slipped away.

He had studied the plans to the warehouse and knew exactly where Damhoff's office was. When he opened the door he found Berend Damhoff himself, calmly sitting behind his desk. "Mr. Damhoff, I presume?"

"Ah, agent Standish." Damhoff glared at the brazen agent.

Mr. Damhoff was a thin, stooped man with gleaming hazel eyes. He had come to America with his family fifteen years ago from The Netherlands. Ten years ago he had vanished from the Denver area only to reappear a year ago to re-establish his drug empire and take care of a few debts. He had many connections and always seemed to stay one step ahead of law officials. He knew all about the undercover agent standing before him and knew that Standish was aware it was him who had set up the hit. "Hope you have your will all in order, agent Standish," Berend sneered. Standish forced the man up out of the chair and led him into the bay area turning him over to Lenny. He would of preferred beating the information out of the contemptible little man, but that would probably make Larabee a little suspicious. Buck and JD watched over the prisoners as the rest started searching the trucks. Ezra nodded to Lenny and headed back to the offices.

Once back inside he quickly started going through desk drawers and filing cabinets. He happened upon one that was locked and smiled, removing his lock picking tools he quickly opened the file drawer. What he saw made his heart stop. Seven manila folders, each labeled with one of the seven agent's names stared back at him. The first two were labeled Chris Larabee and Ezra Standish and were the only ones with anything inside. Ezra quickly grabbed the two folders and placed them behind his back under his jacket then closed the drawer and returned to the others. When Hoskins saw Ezra's face he knew the agent had found something. Damhoff had a smart-ass grin on his face as he watched the other agents meticulously search his trucks. He had ceased his drug operations when he put out the contract on Standish's life.

After an hour and a half Larabee came up to Hoskins not hiding the anger on his rugged face, which actually caused the FBI agent to step back. "NOTHING! We found nothing!"

Hoskins fought back the urge to laugh and shrugged. "Oh really, well, even the FBI makes mistakes." His condescending manner was not helping to alleviate the ATF leader's growing anger.

Chris looked ready to tear out the smart-aleck agent's heart and eat it for dinner. "Don't you ever make mistakes, Mr. Larabee?" Lenny calmly asked.

Standish flinched, for a second he actually feared for his friend's life. Larabee could be very dangerous if you got on his bad side and Hoskins was definitely on that side right now. Ezra was about to intervene when Damhoff saved him the trouble.

"I'll have all your badges for this!" Mr. Damhoff ranted, interrupting the standoff between Chris and Lenny. "You have violated my rights as a tax paying citizen."

"Oh, please," Lenny quipped as he stepped up to Damhoff handing him a piece of paper. "Here, call this number to register a complaint." He knew the drug trafficker wouldn't do anything. Lenny looked over his shoulder and noticed Damhoff's deadly glare. He looked to see who it was directed at, surprised to see that it was Chris Larabee. The blond leader was too busy shouting into his cell phone to notice.

The Seven returned to their office riding on a wave of questions and disparaging comments, most directed at the inefficiency and incompetence of the FBI.

Chris stormed into his office without saying a word to anyone and slammed the door, knocking several pictures from the wall. He had been made a fool of. Tanner glared at Hoskins suspiciously, which the highly trained agent ignored. Hoskins entered the coffee room, immediately silencing the four men who stood there.

"Okay Hoskins, what's really going on?" Nathan asked. Lenny picked up a donut, which Dunne snatched from his hand.

"Whatever do you mean, Agent Jackson?"

"Jeezes, he even sounds like Ezra, we won't get anything out of him," Buck spat. He didn't like being made a fool of either. Lenny decided he was pushing his luck and turned and left, feeling the four pairs of glaring eyes on his back. He had to admit these people were no dummies they suspected something, Ezra better pray they don't discover what it is.

*****Part 4

That night at Standish's apartment the two men sat at the dining room table, both with drinks in their hands and half eaten sub sandwiches. Ezra had opened his file first finding a picture of himself inside and seeing his address and a description of his car. There was also several newspaper clippings about several cases he had worked on in the past, which ended in arrests. The clippings made no mention of his name, but he suspected that Damhoff somehow knew. On a white 3 x 5 card was typed a name "El Diablo" with his name printed underneath.

"Does this mean anything to you?" Handing the card to Lenny.

Hoskins looked at the name and shook his head. "No, but I'll call my office and see what can be dug up."

Ezra stared down at the manila folder with Chris' name on it, for

some reason it scared him. Why would Damhoff have a folder on Larabee, or any of the agents for that matter? ATF didn't normally deal in drug smuggling. He slowly opened it. His fear manifesting itself as a cold hard sweat on his body.

He swore softly and Lenny stood up and walked around to stand over his shoulder. Inside was again several newspaper clippings about various cases. The other information was more disturbing. Ezra pulled out a piece of paper, which had information about Larabee from ten years ago including his home address. Newspaper clippings were paper clipped to the page telling of the death of a homicide detective's family. Ezra didn't know much about what had happened to Chris' family. He knew they had been killed by a bomb meant for Larabee. Another white 3 x 5 card fell out, again the name "El Diablo" with Chris' name typed underneath. The only difference, this card sported the red stamped word 'FAILED' across it.

The suddenly wearisome agent ran his hand through his hair, laying the card on the table. He leaned back in his chair releasing a nervous breath. His voice was strained. "It appears this El Diablo might be our assassin and if he is, he might also be the same one who tried to kill Chris 10 years ago and killed his family."

Hoskins returned to his seat the implication settling hard in his stomach. Ezra grabbed his glass of scotch and downed it fast. He raised his hands and pressed the heels of his palms to his temples. Neither man said a word.

"Ezra, you have to tell Larabee." Hoskins finally broke the maddening silence.

Standish's easygoing expression had fled, replaced with an abiding sadness. "No, I can't. I can't bring that all back. Do you have any idea what that could do to him?" Ezra stated bitterly. Buck had confided in him several weeks ago that he thought Chris was finally putting the past behind him and starting to live his life again. What would this do to him? To know that the murderer of his family was now trying to murder one of his agents. Lenny stared at his old friend realizing that these men meant more to him than even he realized.

"Why would Damhoff want to assassinate a homicide detective?" Ezra loudly mused. Lenny shrugged, still rifling through the newspaper clippings.

"Ezra this is getting to complicated we need to bring the others in," he pleaded with his friend, which he rarely did.

"Not yet Lenny, let's try and see if we can't smoke this 'El Diablo out." Standish knew what he had here was only circumstantial evidence against Damhoff, which couldn't even be used since he stole it. He wanted to tie Damhoff and El Diablo to the murder of Chris' family. He suddenly felt it was something he had to do. Larabee had saved him by offering him a job. He was an agent who everyone believed was on the take, yet Chris saw something in him. He also gave him a second chance when he had run out on their first case. Ezra owed it to this man. He didn't want to reawaken Chris' demons, but maybe finding this El Diablo would help put them to rest forever.

The intuitive FBI agent knew Ezra was seeking acceptance from this

unique group of men and especially from Larabee, who Lenny could tell Ezra greatly respected even though Ezra would never admit this to anyone.

"Okay, two days that's all. Then we call in the troops and you wear a vest at all times, understand."

Standish smiled at Lenny's concern for him.

"I want you to stay in touch with me every minute, if you go to the john I better know it," Lenny added trying to keep the smile from his face and his tone serious. He didn't like this and he knew they would have to face Larabee's wrath when this was all over with, he only hoped they were both alive to enjoy it. ***** Part 5

Ezra arrived early to work the next day and headed down to the basement to see what he could dig up in the old records. He wanted to find information on what Larabee had been involved with when his family was killed.

He searched for over an hour going over every case file since Larabee entered law enforcement up to the death of his family. He found nothing. No mention of Damhoff or El Diablo. He even checked Buck's files, since the two men had worked together for a number of years. He was tempted to talk to Wilmington, but then dismissed the thought. He was sure Buck would help him, but the man couldn't keep a secret if his life depended upon it. He looked at his watch and knew the others would be coming in soon, so he headed back to his office to do some more research on his computer.

Just as he reached his desk his phone rang. The others were filing in, Josiah and Vin giving the undercover agent an incredulous look. They couldn't believe the routinely tardy agent had beat them into the office. Standish just smiled and returned to his phone conversation. "Yeah Lenny, what do you have for me?" Ezra asked, keeping his voice low so the others wouldn't hear.

"El Diablo is, or was, a notorious hit man. His real name is Thomas Cruz, usually only works in Mexico and South America, but if paid enough will come north. As far as I can tell he hasn't been in America since he killed Larabee's family. Now that murder was never pinned to him."

There was silence between the two men and Ezra contemplated what was said. Why would a hitman out of Mexico come back after all these years to kill an ATF agent? Could he be trying to get to Larabee through his men? That would explain those folders with all their names printed on them. He knew Damhoff was the key.

"Have you found any connection between Larabee and Damhoff?" Lenny asked breaking Ezra from his reverie.

"Nothing. There's got to be a connection somewhere we're just missing it." Lenny could hear the frustration in the young agent's voice.

"Well, you have one more day Ez, then we tell Larabee," Hoskins interjected.

"Yeah, sure. I got to go Lenny talk to you later."

Lenny knew that tone, but before he could say anything Ezra hung up.

Ezra arrived home a little past seven that evening to the sound of his answering machine picking up his ringing phone, but the person at the other end hung up. The phone rang again and again the answering machine picked up and again the caller hung up. The third time Ezra picked up the phone.

"Hello?"

"Yeah Mr. Standish, you want information on El Diablo? meet me at the Crystal Rose on Lookout Mountain in one hour." The phone went dead. Ezra hadn't recognized the voice and he knew it was a trap, but he had to take the chance. He picked up the phone to call Lenny then stopped. He couldn't risk the FBI agent's life with his foolish escapades. He wrote Crystal Rose on the notepad next to the phone and grabbed his coat.

Ezra drove his jag up the steep mountain road. The Crystal Rose was a rustic style banquet hall used for parties and weddings, there were several in the Denver Metro area. The road twisted and turned its way slowly around the mountain. The jag's headlights would sweep out into nothingness at the edge of the roadway then come back to reveal an empty road ahead. Halfway up the mountain bright beam headlights, from a semi rig appeared in his rearview mirror. The undercover agent got a sudden bad feeling in the pit of his stomach.

He felt the car lurch forward his seat belt holding him back, as the semi slammed into his rear. It then tried to get alongside the jag scraping the side panel. Ezra punched it, the steep grade along with the winding road making it hard to get away. He fought to keep the car on the road. The semi rammed his back again only this time it didn't let up. Ezra slammed on the brakes, but the sporty car was no match for the behemoth truck. The semi backed off again then came up alongside and slowly started pushing the car towards the edge of the road and the dark abyss beyond. Ezra felt the car leave the road only for a second then a bone jarring crash as it touched earth again. He threw his arms up as his headlights revealed branches and trees coming straight towards him.

The truck stopped at the edge the road it's headlights stretching out over the dense undergrowth.

A medium height, dark-haired man stepped down from the cab of the truck and looked down into the thick, dark foliage. He had taken this job for only one reason. He had been about to retire when Damhoff called asking him to kill an undercover ATF agent. He was about to turn the man down until Damhoff told him that he was a friend of Chris Larabee's. This was his chance to clean up his first and only mistake. He was getting paid for Standish, but Larabee was a personal bonus and one he owed Damhoff. He had failed him once, he wouldn't fail again.

The air bag in the jag had saved him from the initial impact with the guard rail, but not the final one with the tree. It was pitch black, the only sound being the ticking of a cooling engine. Ezra tried to open his eyes, but the pain that shot through his head almost made him scream out. He tried to move and it felt like every bone in his body was broken. He swallowed, berating himself for not informing Lenny where he was going, there would be hell to pay he chuckled inwardly. He tried his door having to reach over using his left hand, but it wouldn't budge. His next mistake was trying to move his legs, this brought a depth of pain he could never of imagined, luckily he didn't have to feel it for very long as pain saving darkness laid claimed to his tortured body.

*****Part 6

Hoskins stormed into the ATF offices, everyone seeing the anguished on his usually self-assured visage. Everyone promptly dropped what they were doing and followed him to Chris' office where he flung open the door and walked in. He ignored Judge Travis who was sitting in a chair in front of the desk. Hoskins strode right up to the desk putting his palms down on the shiny surface. Larabee glared at the intractable agent, this was the second time this man had stormed, uninvited into his office and it was beginning to piss him off.

"Have you heard from Ezra?" Lenny asked, forcing his voice to remain calm.

"What? You storm into my office to ask me a question like that. Get out!" Chris rose from behind his desk ready to bodily remove the obstinate man.

"Ezra's usually late," Buck added from the doorway, he wasn't getting a good feeling about this. Ezra was usually late, except for the last few days.

Lenny slammed his fist on Chris' desk. "You don't understand?"

"Why don't you enlighten us, Mr. Hoskins?" Judge Travis calmly asked. He was getting a bad feeling about this. He had done the agent a favor by helping to stage the raid. He was beginning to think he wasn't told everything.

"It's my fault." Lenny bowed his head in resignation. "I don't know why I let him talk me into this. We should of told you a long time ago." Lenny started pacing in front of Chris' desk. Larabee came out from behind his desk and glared at the agent who continued to pace in front of him.

"What are you talking about?" Chris felt the hair on his neck prickle.

"I didn't come here because of any drug trafficking I came here to warn Ezra that there was a hit out on him."

"What?" Larabee grabbed Lenny by the jacket halting his annoying pacing. Everyone thought Hoskins would kill Chris if he ever laid a hand on him, but the FBI agent seemed to feel he deserved it. He didn't fight or try and pull away from the blond leader's grasp.

"Chris, let him go," Travis yelled.

Lenny turned and looked at the others seeing the concern and fear in their eyes. Chris shoved the older agent away.

"Ezra wanted to find out who the assassin was. He was afraid if he told you all you would just lock him up somewhere and get yourselves killed," Hoskins explained.

Chris began pacing his office and the others quietly moved inside keeping to the walls so as not to get into the path of their boss' quiet rage.

"Berend Damhoff is the one who put out the contact?" Lenny admitted.

"So the raid was what? a diversion?" Josiah questioned, not like being anyone's patsy.

"Not exactly, Ezra was trying to get some information on the assassin," Lenny answered, noticing the angry glares.

"When did you last hear from him?" Chris broke in.

"I called him before he left for home last night. I called him all night and haven't got an answer."

Chris stopped and stood in the middle of the room. "Well, I know where we can get answers."

The agents entered the open bay warehouse, seeing Berend Damhoff standing near one of his trucks giving instructions to a driver.

"Yes gentlemen, do you wish to search my place of business once again?"

Larabee was in no mood, but neither was Lenny and Chris was surprised when he rushed forward and slammed the arrogant drug dealer into the side of the truck throwing his arm across his throat.

"Where is he?" Lenny sneered, spitting into the drug lord's face. His own countenance turning red with rage.

"You better answer him," Chris warned, crossing his arms across his chest and allowing a faint smile to play on his lips. Wilmington out-and-out grinned, leaning on JD's shoulder and enjoying the show. Tanner wanted to just pull his gun and shoot the man in various body parts until he talked.

"You better control your man, Larabee," Damhoff spat.

Chris' grin grew wider. "Well Mr. Damhoff, Agent Hoskins here is not one of my men. He's FBI, so I have no control over him and why would I want to stop him anyway?" With that Lenny put more pressure on Damhoff's throat causing the man to choke and his eyes to bulge.

"Now, I'll ask you one more time where is agent Standish?" Lenny repeated.

"Who?" Damhoff replied, the word strangled in his throat

"You know who you sonuvabitch," Lenny was close to pulling his gun and shooting the diminutive man.

"Chris!" Josiah yelled out. Chris turned and walked towards the huge agent who was examining the front side panel of a silver tractor rig. He ran his hand over the slight dent and black streaks.

"What is it, Josiah?" Chris asked noticing what had the spiritual agent's attention.

"This is black paint scraped off of something." Josiah straightened as Vin and Buck approached. "Ezra's jag is black," Buck unnecessarily pointed out.

*****Part 7

The men arrived at Ezra's apartment in three different vehicles, two of which ignored the lack of parking driving up on the small spot of lawn. Tanner was removing his lock picking equipment when Lenny pushed his way through and produced a key, much to everyone's astonishment. They began searching the apartment for clues to their wayward agent's whereabouts.

Larabee came upon the folder with his name embossed on it and opened it. It was like opening a door and releasing a ghost. Wilmington sensed it first, and saw the familiar anguish come over his old friend's face. Chris' heart stopped and his anger was swallowed up by an immense sadness. He slowly sat down in the chair his face seeming to age right before everyone's eyes. Everyone noticed how deathly quiet their leader had become and moved towards the dining room table.

Lenny noticed the disheartened appearance of the usually stoic leader and found himself in sympathy for the man.

"Chris, what is it?" Vin quietly asked, finding it hard to break the quiet which had descended. He felt like he was intruding upon something very private. He bowed out as Buck moved to his side. This had something to do with Chris' past, only Buck had the right to infringe on this dark part of his life.

Chris looked up at the FBI agent with questioning blue eyes. Lenny thought he could almost see into the somber agent's soul. "Ezra got those out of Damhoff's office," he explained.

Buck was looking over Chris' shoulder and noticed the old newspaper clippings of his family's death. Then he saw the 3 x 5 cards and picked them up.

"El Diablo is the name of the assassin?" Buck asked, placing a hand on Chris' shoulder.

"Yes," the FBI agent confirmed.

Buck swallowed as the pieces started to fall in place. "This El Diablo he's the one who's after Ezra?" Buck voiced trying to make sense of the whole thing.

Lenny nodded his head. "And apparently the same one who killed Larabee's family," Hoskins finally admitted.

Wilmington felt Chris tense under his hand.

"Oh sweet Jesus," Josiah muttered.

"Ezra was afraid what this might bring up so he wanted to try and smoke the assassin out himself. We don't have any concrete evidence tying this El Diablo to Berend Damhoff," Hoskins added.

"What about the cards and folders that Ezra got?" JD asked.

"No good, son. Especially since they were taken without a proper search warrant and they're still only circumstantial," Josiah explained. Chris hadn't said a word, running a finger over the yellowed newspaper picture of his family.

The FBI agent turned his head away to give the ATF leader a little measure of privacy as he relived a personal hell, something everyone in the room understood. Lenny actually felt a little of the animosity towards Larabee melt away. He now knew the man was not a cold, hard unfeeling SOB. The man had a soul that had been torn apart years ago and was probably just now coming back together.

"Chris, do you know any reason Damhoff might have had for hiring an assassin ten years ago? " Nathan asked.

Larabee's brow furrowed in concentration, trying to pick the name out of the hundreds that he dealt with, but nothing came to mind.

He shook his head and came back to the present. They had to find Ezra. His family was dead. He would not allow this El Diablo to steal someone else from him.

"Look at this." JD produced the note paper with the word 'Crystal Rose' written on it.

"There are several Crystal Roses around Denver," Buck added.

Chris looked at Josiah and they both thought of the tractor rig with the black paint.

"Yeah, but only one atop a mountain," Chris reminded them.

Everyone ran for their vehicles.

When they reached the bottom of LookOut Mountain the agents all piled out of their respective vehicles. Chris had JD stay in his king cab truck and slowly follow as the rest walked up the road, searching the side for any indication of a car going over.

After almost an hour of walking up hill and searching the terrain Vin

waved everyone forward. He had spotted the busted guard rail and fresh tire tracks in the soft shoulder. They looked down to see a path, which had been torn through the underbrush, there was no sign of Ezra's car.

"JD, call for paramedics!" Chris yelled over his shoulder as he followed Hoskins down the steep slope.

"Slow down Hoskins, before you break your neck," Chris yelled towards him. Hoskins didn't answer, but he did slow his descent. He stopped suddenly and swore looking upon the mangled metal of Ezra's jag in front of him.

*****Part 8

"Oh, God! No," Lenny voiced as he took a good look at the mangled jag. The front end was wrapped around a tree. The windshield was so spider-webbed one couldn't see inside. The passenger side roof was partially caved in. Lenny reached the driver's door and tried to open it without success. He could see his friend's unconscious form being held up by the seat belt, which hopefully saved his life. He started pounding on the driver's window.

Vin and Josiah went to the passenger side window. Sanchez removed his gun and smashed in the already shattered window then threw his heavy coat over the ragged edges. He helped the lean sharpshooter to crawl inside. Tanner licked his lips looking at the blood that covered the left side of the pale agent's face. He checked for a pulse relieved to find one. He looked out the driver's window seeing the anxious faces peer in.

"Josiah, give me something to cover Ezra with," Vin shouted back out. He immediately received Buck's coat, which he placed over Ezra's head. The lean agent then sat back in the passenger seat raising his foot up and across Ezra's body. The others realized what the sharpshooter was about to do and backed off. Vin struck the window, once then twice punching out the window.

Hoskins came quickly up to Ezra grabbing his shoulder and squeezing, his panic causing the words to rush out. "Ezra! Ezra! can you hear me?"

Nathan pushed the worried agent aside and began to assess the southerner's injuries. He placed a dark hand on the undercover agent's warm face bringing forth a slight moan.

"Easy Ezra, it's Nathan. You're going to be alright," he tried to soothe. Vin rested a hand on Ezra's uninjured arm as Jackson examined the blood, which covered half his face, seeing the deep laceration at his temple. He looked down seeing that the dashboard was pinning the smooth-talking agent's legs.

Vin was also examining the crumpled dash seeing blood pooling on the floor, something must of impaled him underneath.

"Someone check and see if they can get in the trunk and get Ezra's jack," Vin suggested. Wilmington immediately went to the back of the car, eager to be of any help. He was able to force the trunk open and quickly removed the jack and a tire iron, passing them to Vin.

"Nathan?" Ezra whispered. His eyes tried to open, but they were too heavy and he soon gave up. He grimaced as he tried to move his left arm. His head felt strange, and it hurt like the worst hangover he ever had. He could hear the voices but couldn't separate them, everyone was jumbled together. His brow furrowed trying to discern and isolate the different voices.

"Easy Ez, don't try and move, your legs are trapped," Nathan explained as Standish seemed to be growing agitated for some reason.

Ezra didn't seem to hear the warning. He tried to move his right leg up causing a searing bolt of pain to shoot up the leg. He screamed in pain, his green eyes flashing open, his face contorting in agony. Tanner grabbed the struggling agent trying to keep him from hurting himself anymore. Nathan reached in through the window grabbing his shoulders. Chris stood silently, his eyes closed and his fists clenched in helpless rage. Buck had turned another shade white at the sound of his fellow agent, and friend's pain.

"Ezra, calm down, please!" Hoskins yelled from over Nathan's shoulder. Ezra shuddered once then passed out his chin falling to his chest. Jackson released his hold on the unconscious man. He placed his hand on Ezra's chest feeling the labored breaths.

"We have to get him out of here, now," the ex-medic exclaimed.

Hoskins was nervously shifting his feet behind Nathan trying to get a look at his friend. He held his questions allowing the ex-medic to do his job, but it was tearing him apart. He felt responsible and if Ezra died he would never forgive himself. He didn't know that Larabee was feeling the exact same thing. Lenny turned to look up the hill and caught a flash of metal. He knew it was a rifle and knew it was pointed right at Larabee.

Before anyone else could react, Hoskins yelled, "Look out!" and dove sideways, catching Chris around the waist, at the same instant that a shot was fired. The two men slammed into the rocky ground. The others immediately took cover pulling out their own weapons. Nathan hated leaving Ezra's side, but he couldn't help the man if he got shot. Vin kept down inside the car and quickly cut Ezra's seat belt and leaned him down as far as he could, getting his head out of the line of fire.

Chris felt Hoskins heavier weight on top of him and tried to push him off hearing the hiss of pain from the FBI agent. Lenny managed to roll off of the blond leader grabbing his arm.

"You alright?" Chris asked, concern flashed across his face.

"Yeah, it just nicked me," Lenny answered. "The shooter is up in those rocks at about two o'clock." Chris pulled out his gun and searched the hillside. Wilmington slid in next to him, gun drawn.

"He's mine, Buck. Take care of Hoskins." With that Chris disappeared up the hill. He was going to face the man that had murdered his family ten years ago, it was a dream come true.

El Diablo had known that the other agents, and especially Chris Larabee would eventually find Standish. He had returned hoping for another chance at the now famous ATF leader. He would of had him too if that other agent hadn't saved his life. Larabee definitely surrounded himself with good men.

Chris cautiously made his way up the mountainside. He caught a glimpse of someone between a couple rocks. He stood forcing the man to fire then quickly ducked down and rolled to the right, firing as he grabbed cover. He stood up again, but this time no shots came. He carefully made his way up the mountain coming upon Thomas Cruz a bullet wound in his chest. The man was still alive, but just barely.

The assassin coughed, blood spitting up from his insides. "Well Mr. Larabee, we meet face to face," the assassin gasped, knowing he was dying. No one would ever know that for the past ten years Thomas Cruz had suffered. Suffered with the knowledge that he had killed an innocent woman and child. This was probably why it had been so easy for Larabee to kill him, something deep down forced the career assassin to make amends the only way he knew how.

Chris squatted down beside the dying man, staring at him like some new type of fungus he had just discovered.

"Why?" Chris whispered.

"Oh, nothing personal I assure you, all business. I was truly sorry about your family, that was not suppose to happen." Thomas Cruz tried to take a deep breath, but found it impossible. "I was young and inexperienced back then. I didn't even get paid." He chuckled, wincing at the pain it caused. Then El Diablo turned his dark eyes to meet Larabee's cold blue ones. "It's ironic really, my first and only mistake kills me." With that the light left the man's eyes and he stared sightlessly up into the blue sky.

He thought he would feel something, a revelation, feel the darkness and despair lift from his soul. The ache diminish from his heart. But he felt nothing. He looked at the man who had murdered his family, and he still felt the agonizing sorrow that they left behind. Nothing would relieve the pain of losing his wife and son, but at least he had avenged their death, hopefully they were at least at peace.

Vin had placed the jack under the dash and was vigorously pumping it to raise the dashboard off his friend's legs.

"We're going to get you out of here, Ez, don't you worry," Vin calmly talked to his unconscious compatriot.

Nathan called from his place of cover to Vin. "Vin, how is he?"

Tanner placed a couple fingers to the southerner's throat, feeling the weak pulse. "Not good Nat, we have to get him out of here soon. I almost have the dash off his legs."

"Damn!" No one knew what was happening with the assassin or if it was safe to leave cover.

Buck raised his gun at the sound of someone approaching. He lowered it at the sight of his old friend, relief lifting the sober mask from his face. Chris walked past him and up to the car where Ezra was still trapped. He picked the crow bar up off the ground and thrust it into the door frame, putting all his anger, despair and anguish behind it. The door popped open just as Vin got the dash up far enough so they could slide the injured man out. They all heard the siren up on the road. Chris, Buck and Nathan gently laid Ezra out on the ground. Nathan applied pressure to his leg where a deep laceration was allowing blood to flow freely. Hoskins was at his friend's head gently pushing back the unruly hair from his brow. Agent Dunne followed the medics as they hurried down the hillside carrying a gurney.

They quickly stopped the bleeding from his leg and wrapped his head wound and splinted his arm. Ezra was placed on the gurney and with Buck, Chris, Vin and Josiah's help quickly carried back up the hillside to the waiting ambulance. Nathan worried that through the whole thing, Ezra never made a sound. Everyone jumped into the back of Chris' king cab and followed the ambulance to the hospital.

***** Part 9

"Oh not Standish again," Dr. Lauren Murry said as she met the gurney in the hospital lobby and looked down into the handsome features of the southerner. She knew the other six would be tearing through the doors any minute and she wasn't disappointed. She did a quick check then started barking out orders to the other doctors and nurses. Larabee watched as his old-family friend did what she did best, take charge. Ezra was quickly spirited away leaving seven forlorn expressions in his wake.

Dr. Murry turned to the seven men who stood before her. They were all dirty, scratched and bruised, and looked ready to collapse from exhaustion. But what really scared her, was the fear she saw in each of these stalwart men's faces. Her brown eyes stopped on the handsome older gentleman who she didn't recognize, but carried the same fear stricken expression as the rest.

"Sir, why are you bleeding all over my floor?" Dr. Murry simply asked, pushing her sandy-blond hair behind her ear and staring at the pale FBI agent.

Lenny looked down seeing the blood dripping from his arm and landing on the clean white linoleum floor. "Aww hell." His eyes rolled up into his head and his legs buckled. Chris and Josiah grabbed the agent before he hit the floor. Dr. Murry shook her head and pointed towards an empty room.

"Take him in there, I'll send a nurse in to take care of him." She wasn't overly concerned, the man had managed to walk into the hospital under his own power. He was probably just weak from blood loss. She was more concerned about Agent Standish.

"Just a nick, huh?" Larabee grunted to the unconscious FBI agent. They carried the limp man into the room and laid him on the table. Sanchez removed the agent's leather jacket and Nathan came in and quickly looked at the wound.

"It went straight through, he should be alright, probably just nicked an artery. Just lost too much blood," he assured the others.

A couple hours later Lenny was wheeled into the waiting room where six worried lawmen waited for word on their seventh. They had all managed to clean themselves up slightly. The orderly left Hoskins there and he remained in the chair, not yet ready to trust his legs to hold him. He had a glass of orange juice in his hand, which he tried to force down.

"Any news?" He finally asked, looking at the six agents who sat in various positions in the stiff back chairs. He noticed that Vin sported a bandage around his hand where he had cut it going through the broken window. JD had a bruise on the side of his cheek where he had fallen running down the hillside after the medics. Larabee reminded him of the walking wounded in Nam. His wounds were too deep to just patch up. The respected leader had lost some of his fervor; and for some reason Lenny was saddened by this. He actually enjoyed his life-threatening confrontations with the intimidating ATF agent.

"He's still in surgery, there were internal injuries," Nathan quietly explained.

JD was about to stand and start pacing again until Buck grabbed his shoulder forcing him back down in the chair. Dunne's nervous energy was driving him crazy.

Chris was glaring at the wheel-chair bound agent. Hoskins noticed the tension in the blond leader's face.

"Is there a problem, Mr. Larabee?" Hoskins sneered not really in the mood for a showdown right now, but then again it would help to get his mind off of Ezra.

Chris licked his lips and stood. "Yeah, why did you let Ezra risk his life?"

"He is a grown man, Mr. Larabee."

"Not good enough. You're supposed to be his friend, you know how he is. You should have told us."

Lenny glared back up at the blond agent then noticed that the others were also not looking upon him too fondly. The problem was they were right, he should never have let Ezra talk him into keeping this under wraps.

"Ezra didn't want anyone getting hurt because of him. He still has a hard time with this team thing," Hoskins explained.

"Well, when he comes out of this you're going to help us explain it to him," Chris replied the hint of a smile tempering his words. Lenny nodded, for the first time in agreement with the exacting leader.

Larabee would one day have to tell Ezra how grateful he really was. If he hadn't taken it upon himself to check out Damhoff they may

never have found the killer of his own family. But Chris also realized he had been scared, scared of losing someone close to him again and the only way he could deal with this fear was to be angry.

Dr. Lauren Murry interrupted his heated thoughts. "Gentlemen, Mr. Standish is out of surgery and in ICU."

"Is he going to be alright?" Buck hurriedly asked.

"Well there was considerable blood loss and some internal hemorrhaging and he has a severe concussion also three broken ribs, and a broken arm. His leg isn't going to be in such good shape for awhile either, but he should make a full recovery."

"Can we see him?" Larabee asked.

Lauren looked at the concerned faces of the seven men. "Yes, but don't stay to long."

The Seven government agents crowded into the small room. Lenny's heart almost broke at the sight of his friend. He had various IV lines sticking out of his arms. His handsome face was pale and slack with a large, deep purplish bruise covering half his face. They could hardly tell he was even breathing and they all glanced at the heart monitor for assurance. Hoskins went to the other side and placed a hand on his shoulder. Ezra was the closest thing he had to family he couldn't imagine losing him. He looked over at Larabee, who stared down at his undercover agent. Lenny squeezed Ezra's shoulder tighter hoping he could somehow feel his presence.

The next day Doctor Murry entered Standish's room to find six men sprawled out all over the floor. Only two of them sat slumped down in chairs. She shook her head in disbelief and went over to check on her patient's condition. Chris woke up as she was writing something down in a chart.

"Is he okay?" asking a little more urgently due to just waking up.

"Yes, Chris, he's fine. I thought I told you all not to stay to long," she chided.

"Sorry doc." Chris gave her a contrite smirk. They had known each other for a long time and he knew he could probably get away with murder with her, but he didn't want to take advantage.

Chris looked down at the ashen features of his at times difficult agent. He looked around the room and smiled at the others trying to wake up from a very restless and uncomfortable sleep. He noticed that Sanchez was missing.

Ezra groaned causing the doctor to lean over and open one of his eyes. She smiled. "I think he's coming out of it." These words brought instant life to the others.

Dr. Murry glared at Chris. "Now, you have fifteen minutes then I want you all out of here, or I'll admit the lot of you and let the new nurses practice procedures on you."

Lauren saw the lascivious smile on Buck's face at the mention of nurses. "There are male nurses who need practice too, Mr. Wilmington." She had to bite her tongue to keep from laughing when Buck's smile fell dramatically from his handsome face.

"We'll leave," Larabee promised.

Ezra's green eyes fluttered a moment then were still. A moment later he tried again. This time they opened and stayed open looking at the worried faces surrounding his bed.

"Hey kid, how you feeling?" Lenny asked, taking his friend's hand and squeezing it.

"Like I went off a cliff," Ezra rasped. JD handed Lenny a glass of water and with Chris' help they managed to get a couple sips down his dry throat.

Standish noticed that Lenny's arm was in a sling. "What happened to you, did Larabee finally shoot you?" Everyone in the room had to laugh.

"No, but I hate to tell you, I saved your boss' ass," Lenny admitted.

"Why in the hell would you do that?" Ezra good-naturedly asked, the faint smile on his face remained as he drifted off.

Sanchez had silently slipped in, a smile coming to his face when he heard the familiar southern drawl waft across the room. Larabee turned his head catching sight of the big agent entering the room. He reluctantly moved away from his injured man and went up to Josiah.

Larabee could tell the steadfast agent had something to say. "Last night, Damhoff trucking burned down. Very suspiciously," Sanchez replied, getting everyone's attention. "They didn't find any bodies so it can be assumed that Damhoff escaped," he added.

The vein on Chris' forehead began to turn red, his icy blue eyes blazed in anger and his jaw clenched. Josiah placed a calming hand on the slowly simmering man. "Maybe you should share some of those feelings, brother Larabee?"

Chris didn't look up at the taller agent, instead, his eyes fell on Ezra's roken form lying in the hospital bed. "I don't want to share my feelings right now. I want to find the son-of-a-bitch responsible for this whole thing, then look him in the eye and share my feelings." The menacing tone in the somber agent's voice was not missed by the other agents, a slight shiver went down Hoskins' spine.

"Alright I want this top priority, I want everyone working round the clock to scrape up every bit of information on Berend Damhoff, and El Diablo." Everyone started to file out of the room.

Chris grabbed Tanner's upper arm. "Sorry pard, I need you and Hoskins to guard Ezra incase Damhoff hires someone else to try again."

Vin scowled at the thought of spending time with the egotistical

agent, but he knew Chris was right.

"This won't be a party for me either, Mr. Tanner," Hoskins quipped.

Chris glared at the FBI agent. "Play nice, both of you." He turned to his best friend. "That's an order."

*****Part 10

After three days Standish was to be released from the hospital. Chris and Josiah heard Dr. Murry yelling from inside Ezra's room. The two men entered to see Vin and Hoskins leaning against the wall as Lauren poked and prodded the ungrateful southerner. Ezra sat on the edge of the bed his arm in a sling and his leg wrapped.

"If you don't sit still, Mr. Standish I will have an orderly tie you down until I finish my examination."

Ezra glared at the sandy hair doctor then turned his attention to the two men who had just entered, giving them both deadly stares.

"I do believe our brother is feeling better," Josiah mused, a grin on his long face.

"Well then this is going to make him feel great," Chris remarked. Ezra gave his leader a bewildered look. "You're going to be staying at Buck and JD's until you fully recover."

Hoskins had never seen the look that now graced his friend's handsome visage and had to hold back the laugh that threatened to erupt.

"I refuse to stay in that cesspool they call a home," Ezra sneered.

"They're cleaning it up as we speak," Josiah added.

"Nothing short of the sanitation department coming in could clean that place."

"Listen, it's simple, you go there so we can keep an eye on you or you stay here," Chris calmly but most assuring stated.

Hoskins came up to his friend placing his hands on his shoulders and looking into the green eyes. "Well, as much as I'd like to see this new superfund site I'm afraid I have to say good-bye. My boss thinks I've deserted I have to get back, but I need to know you're going to be safe."

"I will be, don't worry Lenny and thanks for all your help."

"No problem, kid." He looked over at Chris and Josiah. "You're in good hands, whether you know it or not."

Buck, JD and Nathan were waiting when Josiah, Vin and Chris pulled up in Chris' truck. Dr. Murry had given the southerner a sedative to make the trip more comfortable. By the time they reached Buck and JD's place Ezra's face was bathed in sweat and his jaw was clenched.

They eased the semi-conscious man out of the truck and into the apartment. Chris and Josiah eased him down into Buck's bed. Vin quickly removed his boots as Nathan went to his side to check him over.

"Maybe, it was too soon for him to leave the hospital?" Agent Dunne worriedly remarked.

"No, the ride was just a little harder on him than expected. He just needs to rest," Nathan assured everyone. Chris pushed back the sandy-brown hair from Ezra's brow, the agent already in a deep sleep. They all quietly left the room.

It was another two days before Standish could move around the apartment with the use of a cane. He was grateful the dynamic duo was keeping their place relatively clean while he recuperated. He was getting tired of being babysitted and hoped to get back to his place soon. He made his way to one of the two mis-matched sofas, needing a change of scenery from Buck's shrine to women bedroom. He heard before the door even opened, Wilmington and JD's boisterous argument. The two bounded into the living room almost stumbling over the relaxing agent.

"Hey, you're up," JD voiced.

"How you feeling?" Buck asked, noticing that some of the smaller agent's color had returned.

"Much better, Mr. Wilmington. In fact good enough to no longer further impose on you or Mr. Dunne's hospitality."

"You better wait to see what Nathan has to say about that," Vin replied entering the living area from the back room. Ezra cringed, forgetting that the quiet sharpshooter had been watching over him for the last couple hours.

Buck and JD went into the kitchen to make lunch until they heard Josiah, Chris and Nathan enter the apartment all three lawmen giving smiles to the put upon undercover agent.

"We have some news," Josiah explained. Chris nodded for Sanchez to continue.

"We discovered that Berend Damhoff was really Vernon Hiler."

"Holy shit!" Buck exclaimed.

"Does that mean something?" Vin asked.

Larabee sat down in one of the recliners his arms on his knees, his hands clasped. "I killed his son George in a drug raid, a month before my family was killed."

"Hiler/Damhoff hired an inexperienced assassin ten years ago, who messed up then ran back to Mexico. Afraid of being busted he changed his name and left the area deciding to bide his time," Josiah continued.

"But why did he go after Ezra?" JD asked.

"He planned on going after all of us," Ezra added. "There were folders for each of us in his office."

"I think Damhoff was doing someone else a favor. We found the name of one of your old acquaintance, a Mr. Harry Wells," Chris exclaimed, turning to Ezra.

Standish leaned his head back on the couch. "Good Lord, I got his brother arrested a couple months ago. I was getting ready to supply evidence against him to the DA."

"The fire burned all of Damhoff's records and probably any evidence to tie the two me together, but we know that they at least knew each other and it's a good bet that Damhoff hired this El Diablo for Wells, figuring he would also want to clean up his first mistake," Nathan replied.

"Sort of a two for one sale," Wilmington blurted out receiving withering glares from the others. JD slapped the tactless agent's head.

"Does anyone know the whereabouts of our Mr. Hiler?" Ezra hazard to ask.

"Afraid not, the police have been looking, but so far no luck. He probably already left the country," Nathan replied.

"Should we try and track him down?" Vin asked.

"Nah, he'll be back to try again someday," Chris answered. "I just wonder if he realizes killing me won't take away the demons he's carrying."

The End

End
file.